

Note to CT Transportation Committee members:

The following memo sums up the ARC issue I used to illustrate my testimony in support of a regional infrastructure authority should be established, as proposed by 5646; I would add freight to the scope as well. It was sent to the New England Governors a few days ago, as well as to Gov Patterson of New York.

Thank you

Jim RePass
617-269-5478

Urgent

February 16, 2009

To:

"Gov. David Patterson" <stacie.bennett@chamber.state.ny.us>, "Gov. Jodi Rell" <Governor.Rell@ct.gov>, "Gov. John Baldacci" <Gregory.Nadeau@maine.gov>, "Gov. Deval Patrick" <doug.rubin@ma.state.gov>, "Lt Gov. Tim Murray" <Mary.Oroszko@state.ma.us>, "Gov. John Lynch" <john.lynch@nh.gov>, "Gov. Donald Carcieri" <kmckay@gov.state.ri.us>, "Lt. Gov. Elizabeth Roberts" <lfield@ltgov.state.ri.us>, "Gov. Jim Douglas" <Brian.Dubie@state.vt.us>, "Martha Hanson" <Martha.Hanson@state.vt.us>, "Charlie Tretter" <tiac@nege.net>

From: Jim RePass, President & CEO, The National Corridors Initiative

After 20 years, most of you, or your predecessors in office, well know who I am. This is a matter of which I do not speak lightly and it needs your direct attention.

Although I am now called away to national service, I want to make sure you are aware of a New York City project which needs your attention and intervention, because of the long-term harm it will do your state ---and all of New England plus upstate New York --- if left unaltered.

Herewith:

- My organization, the National Corridors Initiative, founded in 1989, is a national advocacy group for investment in transportation infrastructure. By way of regional reference, we negotiated the release, with the George Bush (I) White House, of the funds needed to complete the high-speed rail line between Boston and New York City; this project, which had been blocked by the Reagan and then Bush (I) administrations, was unblocked by us and completed in 1999; it cut the (then) 5-6 hour travel time between those cities to what it is now, 3½ hours, as you probably know.
- We work nationwide, but have a special emphasis in New England/upstate New York, because its infrastructure is the oldest in America and is most in need of attention, investment, and renewal. One of the reasons upstate New York and significant portions of New England are either literally depopulating, or at best failing to match the economic/demographic growth of other regions, is due to our decrepit transportation infrastructure. Again, I am quite sure you know this already.
- What is new, and urgent for you to confront, is the terrible recent US DOT "Record of Decision" -- as you know a legally significant milestone in the process of building large infrastructure projects --- forced through by NJ Transit in the dying days of the Bush (II) Administration (i.e., about 30 day ago, shortly before Barack Obama's inauguration), to build a new rail tunnel under

the Hudson River and into New York City which --- rather than as originally proposed, connecting Penn Station and Grand Central Terminal --- will instead dead-end in stub tracks 170 feet under 34th Street. This is the "Access to the Region's Core" or ARC project.

- The decision to proceed with a literally half-baked tunnel project will slowly but irreversibly strangle the economic growth of New England and upstate New York, because of the following:
 - By cutting off the planned connection between Penn Station and Grand Central, it forecloses any hope of ground transportation growth through the city for the rest of the 21st century and possibly beyond; this kind of infrastructure project is usually functional for at least a century;
 - Because Amtrak has decided it must close starting this year at least one of the *existing* Hudson River tubes permanently on weekends to make essential repairs, the NJT decision cuts in half from this year forward weekend access from New Jersey/Washington/points South to much of New York City, upstate New York, and New England. This will be particularly damaging during the tourist seasons, but also year-round.
- This decision was forced through in a panic without regard to any but New Jersey interests, in order to have a "shovel-ready" project on line for the "stimulus package"; that package must and does indeed include transit and rail projects, but this parochially structured project needs to be modified to fulfill its original intent, and the intent of all who supported its creation; i.e., to link Penn Station with Grand Central Terminal, and then connect the Eastern Seaboard to points North. To do otherwise with a 100-year project like this one surely is borders on the criminal, because it casts in concrete --- and schist --- a 19th-century-style "terminal" rail system when the rest of the world has long since discovered that through-service stations are essential for continued economic growth in major urban areas.
- We are grateful to John Baldacci of Maine that The New England Governors/Eastern Canadian Premiers at their recent 2008 conference at Bar Harbor adopted a resolution to move forward on the notion of better regional infrastructure cooperation at the policy level, under the direction of Gov. Baldacci, as NCI has proposed for 15 years. We can discuss this, but for now we need to concentrate on modifying or repealing, as necessary, the Record of Decision issued by the dying Bush Department of Transportation on the ARC project

I hope this helps explain the urgency of my call. Please contact me at 617-269-5478, or by email; it is essential that the ARC Record of Decision be modified so that connection of Penn Station and Grand Central Terminal is mandated for this project, and not put off for "future consideration" That decision is essential for New England and upstate New York's transportation future and will affect it for the next 50-100 years.

Sincerely,

Jim RePass
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